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## Perceptions of trust in policing among ethnic minority youth in Finland

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**Q3.** How do the perceived behaviours of the police shape perceptions of procedural justice (specifically perceptions of participation, fairness, respect and trust; see below) among EMY?

**Q4.** How do these experiences contribute to articulations of compliance or non-compliance with police?

### **Theoretical perspective**

The project's theoretical framework is based on Tyler's theory of procedural justice, arguing that the police foster legitimacy, by acting in a '*procedurally just*' manner. Procedural justice includes four essential components: 1) *Citizen participation*, where feelings of fairness increase if citizens believe they have an opportunity to partake in the decision-making process. 2) *Fairness and neutrality*, perceptions of procedural fairness are connected to impartiality of the decision-making process. Citizens believe that legal authorities should be unbiased and form conclusions based on objective information. They expect to be treated equally regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or gender. 3) *Dignity and respect*, individuals place great importance on the degree of politeness and respect afforded during face-to-face contacts with legal authorities. 4) *Trustworthy motives*, procedural justice is also influenced by the degree of perceived trust and honesty.

However, establishing legitimacy, gaining compliance, and encouraging co-production also raises important sociological issues. Those asserting power enter a dynamic exchange with those being governed, and *legitimacy* may be viewed as an ongoing intersection of expressed consent, legality, and justifiable rules based on (the continuous production of) shared beliefs. Our research will utilize notions of procedural justice as a way of examining the extent to which issues of ethnicity, class, gender and neighbourhood intersect in order to shape and frame perceptions of police legitimacy, policing practices and perceived procedural justice among EMY.

### **Conclusion**

The proposed research project will be important in order to understand issues of 'everyday integration' in three Nordic countries. Moreover, we will be able to compare perceptions of procedural justice among EMY in three large Nordic cities by identifying differences and similarities in EMY experiences with police encounters. Such comparison will be related to differences in policing, integration policy and patterns of immigration, in the three countries.

## **Perceptions of trust in policing among ethnic minority youth in Finland**

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### **Abstract**

This study is a part of the project that compares experiences of policing among ethnic minority youth in four Nordic countries. This paper explores ethnic minority youth's experiences of policing in

Finland (Helsinki). In Finland, the number of immigrants is still comparatively low (6,1 % in 2015). However, compared to the 1990s, there has been a rise in immigration.

Procedural justice theory (PJT) stresses connections between fair treatment and the perceived legitimacy and trustworthiness of the crime control system. Fair, neutral and unbiased police encounters are highlighted as important factors in procedural justice and labelling theories. Research is mainly based on surveys measuring general attitudes, and there is a lack of understandings on how people themselves conceptualize their policing experiences and trust in policing. Furthermore, there is a distinctive lack of PJT-based analyses which take into account how the policing field has changed as security guards increasingly participate in policing public, private and quasi-public spaces.

This study uses qualitative focus group interviews and individual interviews. The paper addresses how ethnic minority youth view aspects of procedural justice and trust in policing. The study asks: What kind of challenges and experiences of discrimination these young people have potentially experienced? What kind of positive encounters they have experienced which can create good relations? In particular, this study examines both theoretically and empirically the relations between ethnic minority youth and private security guards.

## **Introduction**

Encounters with the police and private security guards tend to be a commonplace experience for many young people in Finland, and it has been suggested that securitization and increased policing is particularly visible in young generations' lives (e.g. Saarikkomäki 2017). Furthermore, the rapid extension of private security industry has changed the crime control and policing field (Bayley and Shearing, 1996; White and Gill, 2013). However, there is not much research done in the Nordic countries on the experiences of public and private policing among ethnic minority youth. In recent years the number of immigrants has risen in Finland and in other Nordic countries, and the asylum seeker "crisis" and how it has been portrayed in the media has triggered xenophobic attitudes. There is a risk that immigrants and ethnic minorities are therefore viewed as targets of securitization and policing measures which might further marginalize them. Researchers have highlighted the potentially harmful effects of targeted police practices on relationships between ethnic minority youth and the police (e.g. Holmberg and Kyvsgaard 2003; Piquero 2008; Pettersson 2013; Feinstein 2015). Accordingly, there is an urgent need to study how ethnic minority young people view their relations with policing agents. Furthermore, it is crucial to explore whether the key elements of procedural justice, fair procedures and unbiased treatment, are fulfilled in this societal context where immigration is rising and where the private security guards have gained a larger role in policing.

This study is a part of the ongoing project 'Experiences of policing among ethnic minority youth in the Nordic countries' (EPEN), which includes Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland. The study conducted in Finland focuses not only in police but also on private security guards. This paper

scrutinizes how ethnic minority youth perceive private security guards and it gives special attention to whether the encounters are perceived as procedurally just, fair and respectful. The empirical analysis is ongoing at the moment, accordingly, this paper reviews literature for the research and describes its theoretical background. The results will be published later.

### **Ethnic minorities and policing in Finland**

Compared to other Nordic countries and Western Europe the number of immigrants in Finland is relatively low. There has been, however, an increase in the number of immigrants: In the 1990s the percentage of foreigners in the Finnish population was 0,8 percent whereas by 2015 it had risen to 6,1 percent (Statistics Finland 2015). The largest foreign groups in Finland have migrated from the former Soviet Union, Estonia, Somalia, Iraq, former Yugoslavia and China (*ibid.*). Most live in the Helsinki metropolitan area and a large share lives in Eastern parts of Helsinki. The need for a comprehensive study of the policing of young people from ethnic minorities in Nordic region is urgent. There is research done in other countries, mainly in the USA, and many studies suggest that policing of ethnic minorities is disproportionate (e.g. Holmberg and Kyvsgaard 2003; Piquero 2008; Kochel et al. 2011; Pettersson 2013; Feinstein 2015). Regarding mainly adults, there exists some Finnish research on relations between ethnic minorities and the police (Grönfors 1979; Egharevba 2004; Honkatukia & Suurpää 2007; Saari 2009; see also ongoing project Keskinen) and on immigrants' experiences in prison (Huhta 2012).

Saari's (2009, 404–414) review of Finnish studies on relations between ethnic minorities and the police found that studies that focused on police perspectives perceived the relations more positively than studies that were conducted from the point of view of ethnic minorities. Although the views of the police were varied and there were also positive views, many studies highlighted negative relations and low trust among ethnic minorities (*ibid.*). Honkatukia and Suurpää (2007, 125) interviewed young men with immigrant and Finnish Roma backgrounds of their experiences in the criminal justice system; these men defined the police on one hand as useful and only doing their job but on the other sometimes acting unfairly. An ethnographic study of daily lives of young male Somalis in Helsinki described how they were often stopped and searched by the police and how it was sometimes difficult to use city spaces without experiencing police attention that they felt was discriminatory (Hautaniemi 2004, 107–112).

In my previous study, which is based on focus group data of ethnic majority Finns, I found that young people evaluated their perceptions of trust in police and private security guards according to many factors, such as fair and respectful treatment, and whether they perceived that some groups were disproportionately targeted (Saarikkomäki 2016, 2017). However, the study did not focus on the experiences of ethnic minority youth themselves. The young people perceived that some policing agents, particularly security guards, usually suspect ethnic minorities. Some suggested that when they hung out with young people from ethnic minorities, they experienced more policing attention. (*ibid.*) Longer education of the police officers can aid them to act fairer and less selectively compared to private security guards (Saarikkomäki 2017). The young people regarded private security guards

as less trustworthy, procedurally just, respectful and fair as compared to police officers (Saarikkomäki 2017). The study highlighted the importance of considering not only the police but also private security guards when scrutinizing young people's experiences of policing and social control.

### **The changed public-private policing context**

Despite significant transformations in policing due to the expansion of private security, much of the criminological and policing research has focused on the police and on the criminal justice system. This paper considers that in order to understand policing and its effects on people more broadly, it is highly crucial to include private policing. Governance of security and crime control is typically understood as something that the police and the criminal justice system have the monopoly on. However, the extensive and rapid rise of private security, witnessed in many Western countries including Nordic regions, has profoundly transformed the governance of security (e.g. Bayley and Shearing, 1996; Button 2002; Kerttula 2010; Löfstrand 2013; White and Gill, 2013; Schuilenburg 2015). Societies have undergone a radical shift from a criminal justice system of crime control, monopolized by the state and its police, to a system where also private sector participates in delivering security (ibid). It has been suggested that police monopoly of crime control and maintenance of public order has been dismantled as public and private policing fields have been mixed (ibid.).

The private security field in Finland is not, however, completely distant from the state and crime control system since they can operate together with the police, fulfil a public mandate of order maintenance in public spaces, and as they use legal powers issued by the state. In this way, although they are fundamentally private actors, they cannot be regarded solely as private actors selling security but their role in crime control and order maintenance is crucial. Private security guards are here defined as policing agents, although their role and task are different from the police (see e.g. Button 2002: 122–125; Saarikkomäki 2017). Private security guards typically patrol in shopping malls and stores as well as in public city spaces, such as subway and railway stations, where young people spend their free time. Prior research indicates that encounters between security guards and young people are frequent and young people often experience them as negative (Matthews et al. 2000; Saarikkomäki 2017). However, there seems to be a distinctive lack of research on ethnic minorities' experiences of private security guards.

### **Procedural justice and trust in policing**

Why is it important to study citizens' perceptions of policing agents? Procedural justice addresses connections between perceived fair treatment of police behavior and its connection to trust and legitimacy towards criminal justice system. The main argument is that citizens' perceptions that the police and other crime control agents treat them fairly and in a procedurally just manner is the primary influence for constituting trust in and legitimacy of the system (e.g. Tyler 1990; Murphy 2015; Bradford & Jackson 2015). Tyler (1990) suggests that the crucial elements which create perceptions of procedural justice are neutral and unselective criminal justice processes, participation

in decision-making processes and perceptions that policing agents treat people with politeness, respect and fairness. Survey-based research suggest that feelings of procedural unfairness, for instance perceiving police behaviors as disrespectful and unfair, is connected with unwillingness to obey the law and cooperate with the police (e.g. Tyler 1990; Murphy 2015).

Although the procedural justice literature has been growing rapidly, there are gaps in research that this study aims to fulfil. Firstly, prior research has focused on the public police and justice system. I have demonstrated how the policing field has transformed, and private security agents are important policing agents in many contexts. Secondly, this study provides new perspectives and methods to a survey-dominated research field by using a qualitative approach. Finally, procedural justice research has not focused enough on ethnic minorities. Van Craen (2012) suggest that feelings of insecurity and perceptions of discrimination play a large part in accounting for ethnic minorities' confidence (or lack of) in the police. What is also of importance, is to take into account how experiences of discriminative police practices might create feelings of fear, anger, rage and humiliation (Van Harris, 1997, 570).

### **Data, methods and prospected preliminary results**

The data consist of semi-structured individual interviews and focus group interviews with young people whose parent(s) were born outside Europe or who were themselves born outside Europe (first or second generation immigrants). At the moment, I have conducted interviews with 27 young people (9 individual interviews and 6 focus group interviews). There were 7 females and 20 males aged from 15 to 18 participating. The interviews were done in 2016–2017. In the focus groups, the participants where a group of friends and the number of participants were from 2 to 4. Most of the participants live in Eastern Helsinki and others live in Western/Northern Helsinki or in the metropolitan area. Most of them had been born in Finland. All the interviews were conducted in Finnish. A largest group participating in the interviews where young people who were born in Finland but whose parents had been born in Africa (Somalia was the largest group) and there were also a few participants whose parent(s) where e.g. from Russia, Afghanistan or Vietnam.

I recruited the participants from two youth clubs in Helsinki and I conducted the interviews in their premises. I also asked the youth club workers to recruit participants when they move around in Helsinki and I asked young people to tell their friends about the research. Most of the participants I recruited directly from the youth clubs but some of the participants were recruited with the aforementioned snowball method. I also contacted other youth clubs and associations that work with young people and with people from multicultural backgrounds to share my advertisement about the research, but I did not receive any contacts through this. Accordingly, the best way to find participants was to spend time at the youth club and contact young people directly there. I had an advertisement in the youth club about a possibility to participate for a research about experiences and perceptions of the police (if you were aged 15 to 25 and if your parents were born outside Europe). The advertisement was in Finnish as the idea was to interview those who have lived in Finland approximately more than five years. I interviewed everyone who wanted to participate who

were themselves or their parent(s) born outside Europe. I also interviewed a few young people whose parent(s) were born in Russia or in east of Europe as they wanted to participate. I gave movie tickets to all the participants to motivate them and to thank for their time.

The interviews usually took 40 to 60 minutes. The interview questions mainly handled personal and friends' experiences and perceptions of the police and general trust in the police. I used interview questions that were common for the project but I also tried to make the interviews conversation-like, accordingly, I did not follow the questions strictly. During the interviews, the young people also told about their encounters with private security guards and in the end of the interviews I had specific questions about these encounters.

The data analysis of this paper focusing on private security guards is in the progress, the plan is to conduct thematic analysis in order to answer the following question: How ethnic minority young people describe their encounters with private security guards? What kind of perceptions they have towards private security guards? Are these perceptions different towards the public police? What kind of aspects of procedural fairness/unfairness they describe? Do they have experiences of discrimination?

Ethnic minorities and immigrants can experience feelings of being "others" in relation to ethnic majorities and they might feel that they are only heard as representatives of minority groups (Rastas 2005). There can be a risk of further marginalizing if they are always treated as ethnic minorities or immigrants. I aimed to be sensitive in the interviews to hear the participants' experiences and how they talk about their identity. In the interviews, I paid attention for aiming not to produce "otherness", for instance, I first asked questions about free time, school and encounters with policing agents and they could themselves bring up issues related to how they identify themselves and possible difficulties in living in Finland as a racialized group. Many spend their free time often in multicultural groups of friends. I also asked if they believed that the policing agents treat everyone similarly or if they have an impression that some groups are discriminated. It can be difficult to talk about possible experiences of discrimination and to name them, but I feel that these issues should be addressed as long as the participants can feel that they can choose what they want to share (e.g. Souto et al. 2015).

It seemed that many of the young people felt that they or their friends were sometimes targeted by policing agents because of their young age and minority ethnic background. This came up when they talked about their personal or friends' encounters with policing agents and when they reflected the feelings these encounters aroused. Many of the interviewees reflected the difficulties of living in Finland as racialized groups making it important to also highlight these kind of experiences. Furthermore, the experiences should be analyzed also in the context of age, class and other intersecting factors. Although this topic is sensitive and can be difficult to approach, it is important to address the young people's experiences as prior research has shown that there can be difficulties in relations between ethnic minorities and the police (e.g. Saari 2009). The young people had,

however, also positive experiences about policing agents and situations where they felt treated fairly or where they got help from the police or security guards.

The interviewees had encountered private security guards for instance in stores, shopping malls, metro and in stations. Preliminary findings suggest that many of the interviewees have had encounters with private policing agents and they were sometimes experienced more negatively than the police. However, the perceptions were multisided and there were also rather positive encounters for instance when young people needed help. There were for instance situations where the interviewees had faced assaults and racism in city space and this had resulted in a fight which the private policing agents had stopped. Many, however, felt under suspicion because of their age and ethnic minority status which affected their social belonging and identity. Furthermore, here were differences in how young people regarded the private security guards in relations to police (see also Saarikkomäki 2017).

The findings will be published later. The aim is to produce information of whether targets of policing perceive security guards as legitimate and procedurally just and where developments are needed. The prospected project gives particular attention to previously neglected area of the experiences of ethnic minority youth. The findings inform policy debates on how the security guards should engage with young people and how to better ensure integration of ethnic minorities. Procedurally unjust practices may contribute to feelings of disrespect, criminalization, and distrust, and can result in alienation and non-compliance with police (e.g. Tyler 1990; Bradford & Jackson 2015). The paper also concludes that private security are significant policing agents that have gained too little attention in criminology.



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